



For Immediate Release

Geraldine Downey

212-854-0127

[Email](#)

[Website](#)

New Columbia Initiative Brings Together New York Criminal Justice Officials with Local Youth to Address Issues of Mass Incarceration

Jointly authored policy proposals to be presented at Columbia University's Inaugural Justice Ambassadors Youth Council Summit on June 11th

New York, June 6th, 2019 – In an effort to change current juvenile justice policy, the inaugural Justice Ambassadors Youth Council Grand Summit seeks to address some of New York City's most challenging community issues surrounding mass incarceration.

The Justice Ambassadors Youth Council was developed by Jarrell E. Daniels in collaboration with the Center for Justice at Columbia University, Friends of the Island Academy, Brooklyn Outreach Network, New York Trinity and New Directions High Schools, as well as city officials from numerous city agencies

Mr. Daniels, Columbia University Justice-in-Education Scholar, Open Society Youth Activist Fellow and Annie E. Casey Youth Advisory Council Member, envisioned the Justice Ambassador program as a way to bring policy makers together with community members to improve the social challenges around issues of mass incarceration.

Justice Ambassador participants will be presenting projects they have developed over the course of an eight week program of joint seminars between the local young people and City officials. The co-authored policy proposals show promising signs for future dialogue involving directly affected populations in shaping the policies that govern their communities.

Daniels, who is formerly incarcerated, was inspired to create the Justice Ambassadors program after spending time in a classroom alongside prosecutors during his time in prison. As he discussed in his recently aired [TED Talk](#), it was through this experience that he came to believe that, "through education we will arrive at a truth that is inclusive and unites us in a pursuit of justice".

The Justice Ambassadors Program components include:

1. Personal Change - participants identify an aspect of themselves they wish to change.
2. Community Change - students present at NYC youth centers to advocate for community change.
3. Social Change - students and city officials co-author policy proposals to improve adverse social conditions.

Tuesday, June 11 marks the final component of the Justice Ambassadors Program, when the inaugural group of 10 youth participants present their co-authored proposals with officials from the Bronx Borough President's Office, Department of Probation, NYPD, and the Manhattan and Brooklyn District Attorney Offices.

Please join us to witness the beginnings of a historic change in public policy developed in collaboration with the communities that are directly affected by it.

Event Details:

Justice Ambassadors Program Graduation and Policy Presentation | June 11th | 5-7 pm | Columbia Law School - Jerome Greene Hall Room 106 - 456 W 116th St. NY, NY 10027 | Press welcome | Invite Only

To confirm your attendance at this event please email: Geraldine Downey at gd20@columbia.edu.

About the Center for Justice at Columbia University:

The [Center for Justice at Columbia University](#) is committed to ending the nation's reliance on criminalization and incarceration, and to advancing alternative approaches to safety and justice through education, research and policy. Our mission is to help transform a criminal justice system from one that is driven by punishment and retribution to one that is centered on prevention and healing. The Center is interdisciplinary and built around community collaboration. We envision a new, replicable model of mobilizing collaborations among the multiple disciplines of the university and community partners to address critical justice issues in ways that enrich research, education, and civic engagement within the university and strengthen leadership among the formerly incarcerated.

We work to transform the justice system through activities that range from directly investing in people affected by mass incarceration to collective action to promote justice policy reform. With our community and university partners, we develop initiatives that shape the focus of our work in the following areas:

Education:

[Prison Education Program:](#) Columbia faculty teach credit-bearing courses to currently incarcerated students (33 courses to over 450 students in 6 facilities).

[Rikers Education Program:](#) Over 400 young people have participated in workshops.

[Justice-in-Education Scholars Program:](#) Formerly incarcerated individuals enroll in a humanities courses at Columbia's campus. 50 Scholars have completed the program, and 10 + students have continued to take courses at Columbia, including 3 as GS students and 3 who are enrolled in graduate courses.

[Inside Criminal Justice:](#) is a first-of-its-kind collaboration with the Manhattan District Attorney's Office in which prosecutors and incarcerated students take a seminar together to explore criminal justice reform and develop policies together. Through the course, these "natural adversaries" develop a mutual understanding that leads them to leave the class committed to work together for justice reform.

Research, Scholarship, Activism and the Arts: We nurture the growth of promising [justice researchers](#), [scholars](#), [artists](#), and activists by providing mentoring, professional development opportunities, and seed-support for their work--when possible.

Public Programming: Through forums, conferences, film screenings and art exhibits we aim to increase awareness, stimulate discussions, and develop a university and community network engaged in justice reform. [Beyond the Bars](#) (BTB), our largest annual event, is a student-driven interdisciplinary conference on cutting-edge issues in mass incarceration.

Women Transcending (WT): [The Women Transcending Initiative](#) supports and highlights the leadership of formerly incarcerated and directly impacted women who are working to end mass incarceration of women and girls. WT

Director: Professor Geraldine Downey: [Click here to email Professor Downey](#).

To stay updated with the Center for Justice visit our [website](#), [sign up for our newsletter](#), or follow us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), or [Twitter](#).